

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Research

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, students' attitude plays a crucial role in determining the success of language acquisition, especially at the junior high school level where foundational skills are formed. Attitude refers to learners' feelings, beliefs, and predispositions towards learning a language (Gardner, 1985). It significantly influences learners' motivation, engagement, and performance in the language learning process (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

In Indonesia, English is a compulsory subject taught from junior high school onwards. However, despite early exposure to English, many students still struggle with low achievement and lack of interest in the subject (Putri & Herman, 2021). This phenomenon may be closely related to students' attitudes toward learning English, which can be either positive or negative, and may manifest in various aspects such as anxiety, enjoyment, or indifference. According to Oxford (1990), a positive attitude enhances the willingness to take risks, increases classroom participation, and fosters autonomy in language learning.

Recent studies emphasize that attitude is not merely an affective factor but is interconnected with cognitive and behavioral domains (Ajzen, 2005). For junior high school students, whose cognitive and emotional development is still evolving, a supportive learning environment and positive experiences are essential in shaping constructive attitudes toward English. When students hold a negative perception—viewing English as difficult or irrelevant—it can hinder their motivation and ultimately their achievement (Yashima, 2002; Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009).

Despite its critical role, attitude in EFL classrooms, particularly at the junior high school level in Indonesia, has not been sufficiently explored. Most existing research tends to focus on vocabulary development, speaking ability, or grammar acquisition, while attitudinal aspects are often overlooked (Wahyuni & Fitriani, 2022). Therefore, this study is necessary to examine how students perceive learning English, what factors influence these perceptions, and how they affect students' behavior and performance in the classroom.

The urgency of this research lies in its potential to inform more effective teaching strategies and policy decisions. By understanding students' attitudes, educators and curriculum developers can design interventions that foster a more engaging and supportive English learning environment. Furthermore, identifying attitudinal patterns at an early educational stage can prevent long-term disengagement and resistance to learning English as students' progress in their academic journey.

In conclusion, analyzing students' attitudes toward learning English is essential to improve educational outcomes, enhance learner motivation, and create a more student-centered approach to language instruction. This research is expected to contribute to the development of more responsive and psychologically supportive English teaching practices in Indonesian junior high schools.

1. The Concept of Attitude in Language Learning.

Attitude in language learning is broadly defined as a psychological tendency expressed by evaluating a particular language or language learning situation with some degree of favor or

disfavor (Gardner, 1985). According to Ajzen (2005), attitude is a multidimensional construct encompassing affective (feelings), cognitive (beliefs), and behavioral (intentions) components. These components work together to shape how a learner responds to the language learning experience.

Attitude to language learning is a term that refers to one's tendencies toward their efforts to learn a language. Attitude can be explained as a person's inclination to respond to something (concept, object, person, situation). Attitudes are feelings about perceptions and feelings, according to Oroujlou and Vehedi (2011). Crystal (2012) [5] defines attitudes toward language as people's feelings and beliefs about other people's or their own languages. Attitude, menurut Trow, "is a mental or emotional readiness for various types of actions in ideal situations" (Djaali; 2011)]. Herlen (1996) defines attitude as a person's readiness or tendency, or the action taken by a person when confronted with a specific object or situation. Gerungan (2000), attitude is a viewpoint or feeling accompanied by a proclivity to act in accordance with the object, and attitude is always related

2. Types of Attitude

Gardner and Lambert (1972) categorized attitudes in language learning into integrative and instrumental types. Integrative attitude refers to a learner's desire to integrate into the target language culture, while instrumental attitude is driven by practical goals, such as job opportunities or academic success. A positive attitude in either domain often correlates with higher motivation and better learning outcomes (Dörnyei, 2001).

Negative and Positive Attitudes

In general, attitudes are classified as either positive or negative. The tendency in a positive attitude is to approach, like, and tend to certain objects. In terms of negative attitude, it is more prevalent to avoid, hate, and be disloyal to certain objects. Someone with certain characteristics is more likely to respond favorably or negatively to certain objects, depending on whether they are useful or valuable to them. He will have a positive attitude if the object is considered good, but a negative attitude if the object is considered bad (Winkel: 20). The learning process is considered as a positive change in an individual's personality in terms of emotional, psychomotor (behavioral), and cognitive domains, because when a person has studied a particular subject, he is supposed to think and behave in a different way, and one's beliefs have changed," writes Kara (2009). Positive attitudes, according to Gardner and Lysynchuk (1990), help target language learners develop higher proficiency in that language. Khalid (2016) asserts that he has found a connection between learning English and having positive attitudes when it comes to studying English as a second language. Although one study found that positive attitudes led to favourable outcomes, other investigations found that negative attitudes led to poor consequences. Because they found that low student performance was a direct result of unfavourable attitudes in English learning, Tella et al. (2010) noted the detrimental effects of attitudes in English learning.

3. Factors Influencing Attitude

Several factors contribute to the formation of students' attitudes, including parental support, teacher behavior, peer influence, previous learning experiences, and perceptions of the English language and its relevance (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Lamb, 2017). Classroom environment and teaching strategies also play a significant role in shaping students' emotional responses to English learning.

Attitudes towards second or foreign language learning are influenced by factors such as personality, educational experience, social environment, age, and gender. Age and gender influence individuals' comprehension and acquisition of a new language (Wang et al., 2022). Understanding these factors enables the development of learning strategies tailored to enhance individuals' language skills. Contextual factors, including psychological, social, and educational conditions, significantly influence language learning. A positive attitude diminishes affective barriers and enhances student motivation (Sabboor Hussain et al., 2020). The teacher's influence on the classroom atmosphere contributes significantly to the establishment of a supportive learning environment. Moreover, students' attitudes, such as motivation and self-confidence, influence their capacity to acquire a new language. An optimistic and driven disposition can enhance student engagement in language acquisition. Self-confidence, self-efficacy, risk-taking, and anxiety are critical factors in language acquisition. Elevated confidence levels facilitate students' acceptance of information and diminish obstacles to learning. Low risk-taking and anxiety enhance students' motivation and learning attitudes in the language learning process (Adara, 2019).

The educational environment, encompassing the learning atmosphere within schools, significantly influences students' attitudes and motivation towards acquiring the target language. Similarly, educational contexts, encompassing instructional methods and classroom interactions, influence students' attitudes and motivation regarding language acquisition (Khan & Takkac, 2021). The teacher's role in fostering a positive and supportive learning environment significantly influences students' attitudes towards language acquisition. Social contexts, including interactions with family, peers, and the community, significantly impact language learning. The family and home environment of a student significantly affect their speech patterns and language comprehension. Peer interaction is essential in language learning, and the community or native speakers of the target language significantly impact this process. Previous findings indicate that enhancing motivation in English learning is essential. Students should not perceive it merely as a mandatory subject; rather, fostering intrinsic motivation is necessary to achieve optimal learning outcomes. However, in higher-level contexts, such as preservice English, individuals are not motivated to pursue a career. This research aims to identify the factors influencing students' attitudes and motivations towards learning English. Attitude and motivation represent intricate social, cultural, and psychological elements that influence pupil engagement with various life experiences, including the acquisition of a second language. Experienced educators recognize that students with a positive attitude progress more rapidly in second language acquisition.

4. Attitude and English Language Learning Outcomes

Studies have consistently shown that students with positive attitudes toward English tend to participate more actively and achieve better academic results (Yashima, 2002; Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009). On the other hand, negative attitudes often result in avoidance behaviors, such as silence, lack of preparation, or anxiety in speaking activities (Horwitz, 2001).

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background described above, the research is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of junior high school students toward learning English?
2. What factors influence students' attitudes toward learning English?
3. How do students' attitudes affect their participation and performance in English learning activities?

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the types of attitudes (positive or negative) held by junior high school students toward learning English.
2. To analyze the internal and external factors that influence students' attitudes.
3. To investigate how students' attitudes relate to their behavior and engagement in English learning processes.

1.4 Significant of The Research In this study are :

1. Theoretical Benefits

1. **Understanding Language Attitudes :** This study seeks to enhance the theoretical framework of language attitude theory by examining how students' perceptions of English are shaped by their social surroundings. The research aims to identify the various influences on language attitudes, including the roles of family and peers.
2. **Motivation and Engagement :** These insights will enrich motivation theory in language learning by shedding light on how students' attitudes—whether positive or negative—toward English affect their motivation and engagement. By grasping this connection, educators can appreciate the crucial role of fostering a supportive social environment to enhance the language learning experience.
3. **Framework for Future Research :** This study will lay the groundwork for future inquiries into language attitudes and social influences. The insights gained here can provide a valuable reference for subsequent research that aims to examine similar themes across various contexts or among different populations.

2. Practical Benefits

1. **Benefits for Researchers :** This study has the potential to serve as a valuable framework for future research examining the relationship between students' attitudes and social factors across various contexts, encompassing a range of educational levels and diverse geographical settings.
2. **Benefits for Students :** This study is essential in helping students appreciate the relationship between language and culture. By enhancing their awareness of the cultural values tied to the English language, it is anticipated that students will cultivate a more positive attitude towards it.
3. **Benefits for Teachers :** This study aims to assist teachers in developing more effective teaching strategies. By gaining insights into the social factors that shape students' attitudes, educators can foster a supportive learning environment that inspires and motivates students to engage actively in learning English.
4. **Benefits for Schools :** The findings of this study can help identify students with negative attitudes towards English. Armed with this information, schools can develop targeted interventions, such as mentoring programs or enhanced learning support, to better assist these students.